United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON AND THE FORMULATION OF AMERICAN STRATEGY FOR THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES**

Major KRIS J. STILLINGS, USMC

AY 00-01

Mentor: Dr. John B. Matthews, Ph.D.

Approved: _____

Date: 12 April 2001

Mentor: A. Kerry Strong

Approved: _____

Date: 12 April 2001

Report Documentation Page

Report Date	Report Type	Dates Covered (from... to)
23 Mar 2001	N/A	-

Title and Subtitle General George Washington and the Formulation of American Strategy for the War of Independence	**Contract Number**
	Grant Number
	Program Element Number
Author(s)	**Project Number**
	Task Number
	Work Unit Number
Performing Organization Name(s) and Address(es) United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College Marine Corps University 2076 South Street Marine Corps Combat Development Command Quantico, VA 22134-5068	**Performing Organization Report Number**
Sponsoring/Monitoring Agency Name(s) and Address(es)	**Sponsor/Monitor's Acronym(s)**
	Sponsor/Monitor's Report Number(s)

Distribution/Availability Statement
Approved for public release, distribution unlimited

Supplementary Notes

Abstract
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Subject Terms

Report Classification unclassified	**Classification of this page** unclassified
Classification of Abstract unclassified	**Limitation of Abstract** UU

Number of Pages
63

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

FORM APPROVED - - - OMB NO. 0704-0188

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (*LEAVE BLANK)*	2. REPORT DATE ***23 MARCH 2001***	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED ***STUDENT RESEARCH PAPER***

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE

GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON AND THE FORMULATION OF AMERICAN STRATEGY FOR THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

5. FUNDING NUMBERS

N/A

6. AUTHOR(S)

MAJOR KRIS J. STILLINGS, U.S. MARINE CORPS

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

USMC COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE
2076 SOUTH STREET, MCCDC, QUANTICO, VA 22134-5068

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

NONE

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

SAME AS #7.

10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER:

NONE

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

NONE

12A. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

NO RESTRICTIONS

12B. DISTRIBUTION CODE

N/A

13. ABSTRACT *(MAXIMUM 200 WORDS)*

AT THE OUTSET OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR, AMERICA, WHEN COMPARED TO THE BRITISH, LACKED IN EVERY ASPECT OF NATIONAL POWER, TO INCLUDE A STRATEGY FOR THE WAR. BY SEPTEMBER OF 1776, GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON COMBINED HIS PRE-REVOLUTIONARY WAR MILITARY EXPERIENCES WITH THE LEASONS HE LEARNED FROM THE INITIAL BATTLES WITH THE BRITISH TO DEVELOP A WINNING STRATEGY FOR FIGHTING THE BRITISH. THIS PAPER ANALYZES GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON AS THE CENTRAL FIGURE IN THE FORMULATION OF AMERICAN STRATEGY AND TRACES THE DEVELOPMENT OF THAT STRATEGY THROUGH WASHINGTON'S YOUTH TO THE RAIDS AT TRENTON AND PRINCETON.

14. SUBJECT TERMS (KEY WORDS ON WHICH TO PERFORM SEARCH)

GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON
WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE
AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR
STRATEGY

15. NUMBER OF PAGES: **52**

16. PRICE CODE: ***N/A***

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE:	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT
UNCLASSIFIED	***UNCLASSIFIED***	***UNCLASSIFIED***	***NONE***

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THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: General George Washington and the formulation of American strategy for the War of Independence

Author: Major Kris J. Stillings, U.S. Marine Corps

Thesis: This historical study investigates the formulation of American strategy for the War of Independence and focuses on General George Washington as the central figure in the development of that strategy.

Discussion: From his early experiences in the French and Indian War to his first days as the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, General George Washington displayed the character and drive needed to forge a nation. Several factors throughout this period would impact greatly on Washington and lead him to the formulation of a winning strategy for fighting the British.

George Washington's military experiences during the French and Indian War greatly assisted him during the Revolutionary War. His early frontier work instilled the toughness and backwoods savvy he would need to physically handle the stresses of wartime. His work with the British army provided a basis of military knowledge and strategy that would become the foundation of his martial arts. He never forgot his passion for offensive action and his dislike for the defense. His experiences with the Indians and militia from numerous colonies taught him the fine art of coalition warfare and bringing different peoples together for one cause. His continuous requests for more and better supplies and men would give him insight into the huge burden faced by the Congress during the Revolutionary War. Finally, his cool-headed leadership under fire provided the framework on which an entire nation and its sole army would rest. All of his experiences throughout this period helped form the framework of his strategy for the War of Independence.

General Washington became the Commander-in-Chief of the Colonial Army at the same time the British began planning the Campaign of 1776. Washington could not have possibly fathomed the immensity of the task that lay before him. From his knowledge of the British, he understood that England would hold almost every advantage in resources, manpower, and equipment over the newly formed Colonial Army. He knew that the British Army and Navy came from the world's strongest empire and would present an adversary seemingly impossible to beat. He knew that he would have little help from his government in everything except strong words of encouragement. He knew this war was his to win or his to lose.

Initially, General Washington did not have a firm plan for fighting the British. He was influenced greatly by events and by Congress in his first assessment of the British warfighting intentions. As the war geared up for its first all out campaign, Washington fell victim to the same misleading assumptions from Bunker Hill as Congress and the rest of his generals. It took many painful lessons at the hands of the British generals to shed the erroneous lessons from Bunker Hill on which the Americans' based their initial strategy for fighting the British. Washington's belief that entrenched American militia on short enlistments could defeat British regulars in a "war of post" almost cost him and America its independence. Only after several near fatal escapes and the very costly surrender of Fort Washington did Washington finally conceptualize the strategy that would rescue the revolution, save his army, and eventually, win the war for America. Yet, the true genius of Washington is that he conceived this winning strategy while most of the others around him were losing their heads. Washington's four-part strategy consisted of recruiting a regular army for the duration, protracting the war, never risking a general action, and retreating until the enemy exposed a part of their army to insult or destruction.

Conclusion: The dramatic change in strategy by Washington resulting in the victories at Trenton and Princeton changed everyone's view of the war. He combined the exploitation of England's critical vulnerabilities of wanting peace and not wanting to lose British lives in America with the Colonial's only possible strategy for winning, and in doing so, demonstrated to the world that the American cause was real. Against all the odds General George Washington defended his newly formed country at the time it was most vulnerable. His leadership and military genius combined brilliantly to produce the men, the strategy, and the indomitable human spirit needed to give birth to a nation.

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Preface

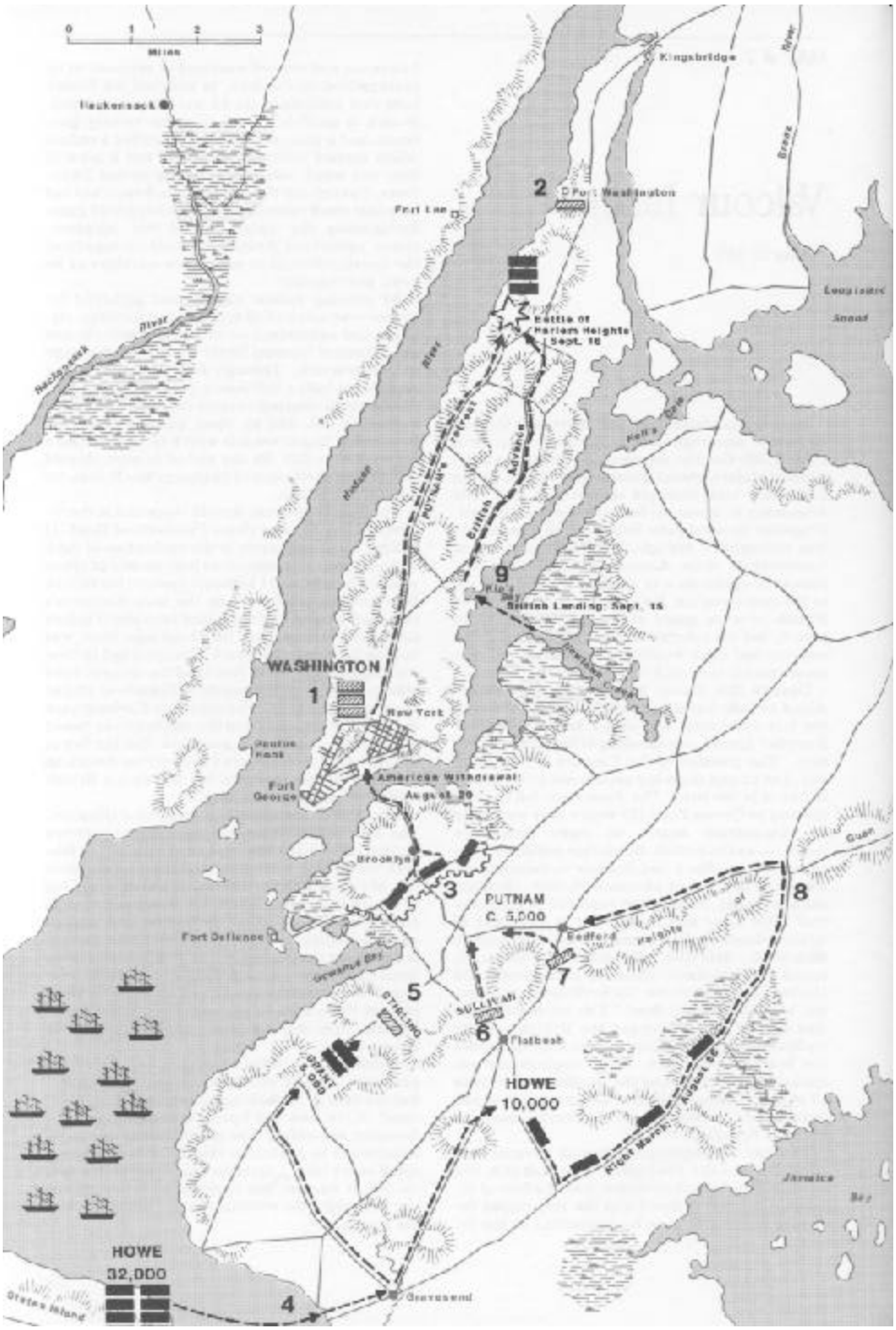
I have been interested in the study of strategy in warfare since my days as a young sergeant on my first Western Pacific deployment. After leaving Hawaii, we sailed straight for Iwo Jima and conducted a battalion sized amphibious landing on the very beaches Marines stormed in 1945. My company then conducted a battlefield tour and discussed, in detail, the plans for the battle and the overall plans for the Pacific war against Japan. I became very interested in the formulation of America's strategy for fighting Japan and spent the next several years learning about the key players in the formulation of that strategy. I have since studied a variety of wars to gleam an understanding of why they were fought and, more importantly, how they were fought.

However, as a student at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, I realized that I have neglected to study the war that is, without a doubt, the most important to our understanding of who we are as Americans — The American War for Independence. Dr. John Matthews made this fact very clear to me during a lecture describing the birth of a nation and the heroes that made America possible. I became very interested in learning about the Revolutionary War and decided to investigate the role of General George Washington in the formulation of American strategy for The War of Independence. I thought it would be interesting to look at all the factors impacting General Washington as he struggled to lead America to independence.

I would like to thank my doctoral mentor, Dr. John "Blackjack" Matthews, for his leadership, patient guidance, and superb advice. I would also like to thank my second mentor, Kerry Strong, Director and Chief Archivist of the Marine Corps University Research Archives,

for her excellent feedback and patient reviews. I am also deeply indebted to Dr. Richard Dinardo for his assistance and guidance in the development of several chapters of this paper. I would like to extend a special thanks to Mrs. Maria Simms for the invaluable time she spent editing this paper.

BATTLES FOR NEW YORK



Source: A Battlefield Atlas of the American Revolution, 26.

INTRODUCTION

Over 2500 years ago, the great Chinese military philosopher, Sun Tzu wrote, "The good fighters of old first put themselves beyond the possibility of defeat, and then waited for an opportunity of defeating the enemy."[1] Some twenty-three centuries later at the outset of the American Revolutionary War, General George Washington unknowingly adopted Sun Tzu's advice as he struggled to create an effective strategy for fighting the British. As the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental army, General Washington was faced with the daunting task of creating a strategy that would keep his meager army alive and poised to defeat a far superior enemy when given the opportunity. However, hard lessons would have to be learned before General Washington could devise a strategy that would lead to the defeat of England.

America was faced with incredible odds and would need a near perfect strategy to defeat the British. America's adversary possessed almost every advantage in preparing for and conducting war. With a well-established government to direct its war effort, a sound financial system to back its war effort, and a well trained, professional army and navy to execute its war effort, the British were far superior to America's almost non-existent elements of national power. Lacking in everything from money to manpower, the Colonial government and its rag-tag military seemed an easy conquest for the British Empire with the world's strongest military.

Yet, by the end of 1776, General Washington and the Colonial forces possessed the very strategy Sun Tzu touted and in their hands laid the key to Britain's downfall. This strategy, based on never risking a general engagement, protracting the war, and retreating

[1] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, ed. James Clavell, (New York: Dell Publishing, 1983), 19.

until the enemy exposes part of its army, was not found in any of the military manuals of the day. In fact, this strategy was far removed from the 18th century European warfare that most nations practiced. The British commanders that fought in America during the war found themselves pitted against a strategy for which they possessed no counter.

Where did this strategy come from? SunTzu's works certainly were not available to General Washington and the Continental Congress possessed no real experience in strategy making. If it could not be found in military manuals and was not transported from Europe then how did it come to be?

The answer to this question is as complex as the War for Independence itself. Many factors came into play for the formulation of the American strategy. The combat experience of American generals, both England's and American's ability to go to war, and experiences from the initial battles of the war would all have a great impact on American strategy. However, none of these factors alone led to the formulation of American strategy. Only when these factors combined with the fall of Fort Washington and the possible loss of Fort Lee was General Washington able to finally conceptualize America's strategy for fighting the British.

Armed with this new strategy, Washington became one of Sun Tzu's good fighters of old. The noted military historian, Colonel Trevor Dupuy, U.S. Army, points out that General Washington's actions changed the world forever, "Not since Alexander the Great had conquered the Persian Empire had such a small army so completely changed the course of world history."[2]

This historical study will examine, in detail, the central role played by General George Washington in the formulation of American strategy for the War of Independence. It

[2] Trevor N. Dupuy, Col., USA, *The Military Life of George Washington: American Soldier*, (New York, Franklin Watts, Inc, 1969), *xi*.

will trace the impact of General Washington's pre-Revolutionary War military experiences upon his initial strategy for fighting the British. It will examine Britain's ability and willingness to prosecute the war and the impact of British actions on General Washington and American strategy development. The study will also look at America's ability to build and sustain an army and the impact of the Continental Congress on General Washington's strategy making.

Additionally, the study will look at the lessons learned by both the British and Americans in the aftermath of Bunker Hill and relate those lessons to the initial strategies of both sides for the opening battles of the 1776 campaign. It will analyze the battles and evaluate their impact on General Washington, his army, and the British in order to trace the final stages of Washington's strategy development. The study will identify the sequence of events after the fall of Fort Washington that led directly to Washington's discovery of the final element of his strategy — **Retreat until the enemy shows a weakness!** Finally, the study will relate America's new strategy for fighting the British and examine the impact of Washington's raid on Trenton, New Jersey, and the long-term effects of Washington's new strategy for the war with England.

CHAPTER 1

MOLDING A HERO

In order to understand the strategic and operational decisions made by General Washington during the outset of the Revolutionary War, his military experiences and training must be examined to present a baseline of military and command aptitude. Certainly his ability to command, recruit, train/equip militia, and inspire men to give their lives for a patriotic cause did not just happen. Many believe the Virginia planter had little or no military experience and that the British losses stemmed more from their general's incompetence than the military genius of Washington. Even a brief examination of his experiences in command during the French and Indian War will, however, prove that Congress' selection of Washington as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army was an act of brilliance.

The Messenger

George Washington's desire for a life of military service began years before his formal appointment as Adjutant General for the royal colony of Virginia in 1753. As a young boy he learned of the adventures of royal service from his older half-brother, Lawrence. Lawrence served as a Captain in an American regiment and he introduced George to the idea of seeking preferment (a Royal commission) in the British Royal Army. Lawrence also held the position of Adjutant General for Virginia and was charged with training the militia in military drill. When Lawrence died in 1752, Washington skillfully moved through the required social circles in the colonial government to replace his half-brother. James Flexner, author of *Washington – The Indispensable Man*, points out that Washington understood the 18th century norm for obtaining a commission and,

"Thus following the mores of an aristocratic world, he secured, at the age of twenty, the title of major and the responsibility of training militia in skills he did not himself possess."[3] Very little time would pass before Washington was called upon for his first military duty.

In 1753, French military took control of a tract of land beyond the Allegheny Mountains believed to be within the chartered limits of Virginia. The governor of Virginia, Mr. Dinwiddie, solicited volunteers to carry a message to the French warning them that they were trespassing on the land of King George. Washington stated in his Journal to the Ohio, 1753, "I was commissioned and appointed by the Honourable *Robert Dinwiddie*, Esq; Governor, &c., of *Virginia*, to visit and deliver a letter to the Commandant of the *French* forces on the *Ohio*, and set out on the intended Journey the same day."[4] Washington was also to gain Indian trust in the area and collect any intelligence he could on French military strengths and intentions.

During the difficult mission, Washington began developing his keen understanding of key terrain and military forces. Although the French refused to yield to British warnings, Washington gained superb intelligence on the positions of French outposts and noted the importance of key terrain at the joining of the Ohio, Monongahela, and Allegheny rivers. His journal reads like a report of an experienced military man as it contained locations, strengths, and firepower of French forts in the area.

He also accomplished his mission of gaining the trust and friendship of several Indian tribes along his route. He displayed tact and diplomacy far beyond his 21 years of age when he found himself seeking the alliance of Indians wronged by the French.

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[3] James T. Flexner, *Washington- The Indispensable Man*, (New York, Plume Books, 1974), 9.
[4] Saul K. Padover, Ed, *The Washington Papers*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), 30.

In the following passage he noted the comments of Half-King, the principle chief of the Seneca Indians, to the French commander regarding the land on which the French have imposed, "…for it is you who are the Disturbers in the Land, by coming and building your Towns; and taking it away unknown to us, and by Force. I come now to tell it to you; for I am not afraid to discharge you off this Land."[5] Washington's knowledge of this volatile situation and his friendship with Half-King would serve him again in the future.

Washington's journal was published upon his return and its contents resulted in a degree of recognition for Washington, both at home and abroad, and a call by the Virginia assembly for military action to reclaim the disputed territory. His display of courage, resourcefulness, and maturity earned Washington a newly found respect in Virginia, the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, and the mission of reinforcing the forks of the Ohio that he deemed a strategic location in his report to Dinwiddie.

Fort Necessity

Washington's report prompted Governor Dinwiddie to send a small force to the forks of the Ohio to start erecting a fort at this strategic location. When the small party sent back word of a French invasion, Dinwiddie ordered Washington's regiment, under the command of Colonel Fry, to reinforce the fort as soon as possible. Unable to use militia, who could not be forced to serve outside of their home district, Washington set about recruiting and training volunteers for the mission. He also had to find uniforms, equipment, and supplies for the force without money or proper backing from the

[5] Padover, 34.

government. In his book, *The Military Life of George Washington*, Colonel Dupuy points out other shortcomings, "His most serious deficiency was a lack of seasoned and experienced noncommissioned officers to assist him in the drilling, training, and disciplining of his soldiers."[6] All of these problems, which would resurface throughout Washington's early military career, helped prepare him for his role as Commander-in-Chief.

Washington set out with some 150 militiamen in April of 1754, to reinforce the fort at the Ohio fork. Colonel Fry was to lead the rest of the regiment to meet with Washington. However, with the death of the Colonel, this did not happen, leaving Washington in command of his first unit. While enroute, he was met by the returning garrison force, and was told that the French had taken the fort, built it up with reinforcements, and named it Fort Duquesne.[7] Despite being greatly outnumbered, Washington continued on to his objective. He then started building a road and a small garrison to facilitate the recapture of the fort. The garrison, near Great Meadows, Pennsylvania, was named Fort Necessity, and it was here that his friendship with Half-King would aid him, for the Indian chief warned Washington of an approaching French force. Washington set out to surprise the French and a short firefight ensued with Washington's men getting the best of the French. The noted historian, Douglas Freeman, summed up Washington's first combat action as he stated, "The surprise had been complete; George's first skirmish had achieved the ideal of a soldier, the destruction of the adversary as a fighting force."[8] During the fight, the leader of the French unit, Joseph

[6] Dupuy, 9.
[7] Flexner, 15.
[8] Douglas Southall Freeman, *George Washington, Volume One, Young Washington*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), 373.

de Jumonville was killed. The French, looking for revenge, set out to find Washington and his men at Fort Necessity.

The ground Washington selected for Fort Necessity showed the commander's lack of warfighting experience. The fort was surrounded by thickly vegetated high ground on three sides and the fort's shallow trenches offered little protection to Washington's men. The French surrounded the fort and, "…they then," wrote Washington, "from every little rising, tree, stump, stone and bush kept up a constant, galling fire upon us."[9] Rain soon added to the problem as the trenches filled with water and ruined gunpowder. After a gallant fight and low on ammunition and food, Washington surrendered the fort to the French. After Washington's unit was allowed to leave the fort, he returned to Virginia.

For his actions, Washington was branded an assassin by the French for the death of Jumonville, and an incompetent provincial officer by the British. To the people of Virginia, he was a hero for his determination and bravery in directing his small force against the French.[10] Washington hoped that with war between England and France on the horizon, he would gain a regular commission in the British Army. British restrictions on Colonials leading British troops and British officers always being senior to Colonial officers would, however, drive Washington to ultimately resign from the army at age twenty-two.

Washington's achievements during his first command demonstrate the early development of leadership qualities that would sustain him and his army during the Revolution. His ability to find volunteers, train/equip them without funds, and his ability to demand the impossible from himself and his men became hallmarks of his future

[9] Washington quoted in Freeman, 404.
[10] Flexner, 18.

military career. He absorbed every piece of military knowledge he could and learned from his mistakes. His actions and reputation in the Colonies began to set the stage for bigger events.

Battle of the Monongahela

In 1755, the British decided to remove the French from Fort Dequesne by force and tasked General Braddock to raise the needed forces. He arrived in Virginia in March of 1755, and George Washington offered his services as an unpaid aide. Washington wrote of his decision to William Byrd on May 25th, 1755, "I am now preparing for, and shall in a few days set off to serve in the ensuing campaign. …for here, if I am to gain any credit, or if I am entitled to the least countenance or esteem, it must be from serving my country without fee or reward."[11] Washington wished to attach himself to the General in a way that would unblock his military career and enable him to gain more "knowledge of the military arts."[12]

During June of 1755, Braddock's army set out for Fort Duquesne with over 2,200 troops, a mix of British regulars and provincial recruits. Washington's past experiences at procuring supplies, transportation, and troops greatly aided Braddock and as Colonel Dupuy points out, "…it was obvious that Washington soon gained the general's high regard."[13] Washington did not, however, hold all of his British superiors in such regard, for his advice not to build a new road to Fort Duquesne went unheard at a great cost of time to the campaign. He wrote of his distaste for the British officers in a letter to John Robinson, "We seem then, to act under an evil Geni, the conduct of our Leaders… to

[11] Padover, 60.
[12] Washington quoted in Flexner, 20.
[13] Dupuy, 14.

whose selfish views I attribute the miscarriage of this Expedition for nothing now but a Miracle can bring this Campaign to a happy sue."[14] Washington's words soon proved very true as the campaign quickly took a horrible turn for the worse.

The movement to Fort Duquesne was slow and tedious. Washington advised Braddock to send a light column of about 1,300 troops ahead of the slow moving wagon trains to head off a possible French reinforcement of the Fort. After the light column, containing both Braddock and Washington, crossed the Monongahela River, the advanced guard was taken under heavy fire from both sides of the road. As Braddock and Washington led the main column forward, the French and Indian fighters lined the sides of the trail and, from the cover of the woods, delivered devastating fire into the British ranks. Panic ensued because, as Flexner points out, "…the British regulars were entirely untrained in fighting out of formation, as individual men. Braddock indignantly denied Washington's request that he be allowed to lead the provincial troops into the woods and engage the enemy in their own way."[15]

Braving intense fire, both Braddock and Washington tried to control the actions of their men. Soon Braddock was wounded and the regular troops began running to the rear. Covered by the three Virginia provincial companies (who fought until there were only 30 men left alive) Washington picked up Braddock and moved him back across the Monongahela just as the Indians cut off the last British soldier on the north side of the river. Washington described the action to his brother in a letter dated July 18, 1755, "But, by the all-powerful dispensations of Providence, I have been protected beyond all

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[14] John C. Fitzpatrick, ed, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799—vol. 2,* online edition, (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress), URL: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwtime.html, accessed 15 December 2000.
[15] Flexner, 24.

human probability and expectations; for I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me, yet escaped unhurt, altho' death was leveling my companions on every side of me!"[16] Losses for the British totaled almost 600 killed and 387 wounded.[17]

Commander-in-Chief of Virginian Forces

From his actions during the battle, Washington's fame continued to grow throughout the colonies. Although the British blamed the defeat on the Colonial Forces, most people considered Washington a hero. After the British pulled all of their forces out of the area west of Virginia, Governor Dinwiddle promoted Washington to Colonel and placed him in charge of all Virginian forces. With the British regular forces gone from the frontier, Washington was charged with raising the forces, training and equipping them, and coming up with a plan for the defense of over three hundred miles of wilderness. Gone too, with the British, went Washington's last chance at preferment.

Now Washington would learn first hand the difficulties of using militia with their lack of discipline that so incensed him throughout his military career. He felt the frustration of a commander tasked to do the impossible feat of stopping the French and Indian raids that left so many dead. He felt the pain of a people living in terror from the raids and stated, "…I solemnly declare, if I know my own mind, I could offer myself a willing sacrifice to the butchering enemy provided that would contribute to the peoples' ease."[18] Finally, he would once again have his right to command challenged by a holder of a Royal commission, and find himself forced to cooperate with the British on another misadventure to take Fort Duquesne.

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[16] Padover, 61.
[17] Dupuy, 18.
[18] Fitzpatrick, online L.O.C., *vol 2*.

In 1758, at the age of twenty-six, Washington resigned his commission as a brigadier. In less than five years, Washington gained a vast amount of experience in almost every aspect of command. From dealing with subordinates to dispensing just discipline and motivating the troops, Washington became well grounded in the fundamentals of leadership. He understood the difficulties of raising troops, training them, equipping them, and keeping them from deserting when times became difficult.

He and his officers attempted first hand to instill discipline and drill into their troops through educating themselves with the military literature of the day. Author of *The War of American Independence*, Don Higginbotham, points out Washington's efforts to educate his officers, "In 1756 Colonel George Washington of the Virginia militia sent to England for Humphrey Bland's *Treatise of Military Discipline* (1727 and subsequent eds.), the classic British military manual of the day, a volume Washington strongly recommended to the officers of his Virginia Regiment."[19]

Washington experienced the frustration of a commander unable to get the support he needed from the very government which had tasked him to accomplish his missions. Yet, despite these difficulties, he remained focused on his mission and stayed the course. From this he would develop an unbreakable sense of devotion to his cause and a sense of diplomacy and tact that would serve him well in the Revolutionary War.

At both the tactical and strategic level of warfare, he must have observed General Braddock and others during planning and learned from his experiences,

> He has acquired a distinct distaste for defensive positions as they tended to deprive the commander of much intelligence and destroyed the commander's offensive impulse. Though possessing no genius in

[19] Don Higginbotham, *The War Of American Independence* (Boston: Northeastern Univ. Press, 1971), 2.

> strategy, young Washington appeared to have sound concepts and just appreciation for the value of the wisely timed offensive.[20]

He observed British officers in the execution of their duties and forged a strong understanding of the 18th century European style of warfare they practiced. He and his Virginia Regiment became well versed in both open battle and wooded engagements. Washington's unit, "…was adjudged 'a fine body of men' by critical British regulars."[21]

Washington experienced the ultimate test of manhood — command in battle. He displayed remarkable coolness and bravery under fire, traits that earned him the respect and admiration of all who served with him. He became a leader of men during times of adversity, times when others failed or refused to try. He planted the seed for the American hero he was to become in the minds of his fellow Colonials and most certainly in the minds of his men. No greater tribute to a command could be made than the one Washington's officers penned in a letter to him requesting he stay on as their leader, "In you we place the utmost confidence. Your presence will only cause a steady firmness and vigor to actuate in every breast, despising the great danger, and thinking light of toils and hardships, while led on by the man we know and love."[22] Although Washington left military service, his experiences would serve him well in the rebellion brewing with Mother England.

Washington's actions and abilities began to show his incredible understanding of both the battlefield and the men who fight on it. His great courage under fire, steadfast determination, intellect, and presence of mind began to take form and one could see the

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[20] James C. Alpin, Major, *George Washington: Military Commander Research Paper*, (Quantico VA: Command and Staff College, February, 1987), 29.
[21] Dupuy, 19
[22] Marcus Cunliffe, *George Washington, Man and Monument*, (New York: Mentor Books, 1955), 51.

development of what Carl von Clausewitz describes in his epic work *On War* as military genius. Clausewitz states,

> If we then ask what sort of mind is likeliest to display the qualities of military genius, experience and observation will both tell us that it is the inquiring rather than the creative mind, the comprehensive rather than the specialized approach, the calm rather than the excitable head to which in war we would choose to entrust the fate of our brothers and children, and the safety and honor of our country.[23]

The fate and honor of America would soon depend on General George Washington, as it would ultimately fall upon his shoulders to build an army and devise a strategy for war with Great Britain.

[23] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War,* Tran. & Ed. Michael Howard & Peter Paret (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 112.

CHAPTER TWO

AN EMPIRE DIVIDED

Many significant events took place prior to the start of open hostilities between America and England that, in one way or another, shaped the formulation of American strategy. These events would mold the way both England, America, and, ultimately, George Washington looked at the initial strategies for the war. Therefore, it is imperative to have a solid understanding of the influence of both Great Britain's and America's abilities and willingness to make war, the effect of the Battle of Bunker Hill on American and British generals, and the impact of the Washington's selection as Commander-in-Chief of American forces.

As early as 1764, the stage for the American Revolution was being set in both England and America. Civil unrest, customs disputes, and New Englanders training for war foretold both the English and American governments that a bloody crisis loomed in the Colonies.[24] The question of how to handle the crisis became the predominant topic in both the Continental Congress and in Parliament, as both sides weighed the advantages of war or peaceful resolution. As the crisis heightened, actions on both sides would have a great impact on Washington and the formulation of American strategy.

George Washington's letter of October 9, 1774, to Robert McKensie defended the behavior of Boston's patriots. Yet, like many members of Congress who still hoped for reconciliation and desired to remain loyal to the Crown, Washington wrote that no, "…thinking man in all of North America, wishes to set up for independency."[25]

[24] For further reading on the causes of the Revolutionary War, see Don Cook's *The Long Fuse,* Chapter 4.
[25] Fitzpatrick, online, L.O.C., *vol. 3.*

Parliament also struggled with the best course of action and remained divided on how to proceed. General Gage, the British Commander-in-Chief of North America, was clear in his views as he warned in 1775, that, "…nothing short of an absolute re-conquest of New England could end the mischief yet – the Cabinet was reluctant to face the truth."[26]

By May of 1775, Washington found himself swept into the rebellion by the actions of New England's patriots at Lexington and Concord.[27] In June of 1775, he accepted the appointment as the Commander-in-Chief of all American forces. His selection became one of historical significance as he was now in the position to lead America to victory. Who better than Washington to lead America? His service in the French and Indian War provided him a better understanding of problems of recruitment, discipline, supply, and inter-colonial cooperation than any other man. Higginbotham points out Washington's unique understanding of the American psyche and the criticality of Washington's selection by stating, "Only one man nurtured in the American military experience could write as Washington did in January, 1777: 'a people unused to restraint must be led, they will not be drove [sic], even those who are ingaged [sic] for the War, must be disciplined by degree.'"[28] As Washington viewed his new army on July 3rd, 1775, he certainly must have had flashbacks of his days with the militia in the 1750's.

Events also thrust England into the war during 1775, as they learned first hand the intentions of New Englanders at Lexington and Concord. In July of 1775, the British found themselves victorious in a costly battle at Bunker Hill in Boston. This battle, the true opening

[26] Mackesy, Piers, *The War for America – 1775-1783* (London: Bison Book, 1993), 2.
[27] First engagement between American militia and British regulars took place on April 19, 1775. See Higginbothan's *The War of American Independence*, 57-65 for details.
[28] Washington quoted in Higginbotham, 19.

battle of the Revolutionary War, would have a lasting impact on both the British, and on General Washington's initial strategy for the Campaign of 1776.

> The new Commander-in-Chief was too naive to realize the significance of the great loss the British had suffered. The general from overseas had been so scornful of their amateur opponents that they sent wave after wave of professional soldiers against the seemingly ridiculous earthen redoubt that the Americans had built. When they counted their dead, the British recognized a bitter lesson: since their soldiers could only be replaced at great cost from overseas, they could not again suffer the major casualties by attacking embattled American farmers who had defenses to crouch behind. When Washington became conscious of this British conclusion, it was to have a major effect on his strategy.[29]

The effect of the Battle of Bunker Hill was immediately seen in Washington's use of maneuver to push the British out of Boston. By placing artillery on Dorchester Heights overlooking Boston, Washington was able to maneuver the British Commander-in Chief, General Howe, out of Boston without firing a shot.[30] This reinforced Washington's assumption that the British would not and could not sustain casualties and this assumption would play a big role in Washington's initial strategy for the campaign of 1776. After Howe's withdraw, Washington started rebuilding his army and he, along with Congress, waited for England's next move.

America, having pushed British forces from American soil, announced to the world its independence from Great Britain on July 2nd, 1776. The Continental Congress and General Washington began preparations to defend their newfound sovereignty against the expected British invasion. "Each officer and soldier should now realize," Washington intoned solemnly, that the, "peace and safety of his country depends solely (under God) on the success of our arms."[31]

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[29] Flexner, 66.
[30] For further information on the Siege of Boston see Freeman's biography of Washington, Volume 4, 1-59.
[31] Washington quoted by Richard D. Palmer, *The Way of the Fox* (London: Greenwood Press, 1975), 115.

The British government, having finally realized the severity of the crisis, planned to amass a huge expeditionary force and send it to America to quell the renegade colonies and restore English law and order in America. British forces would soon put to the test America's ability to succeed with arms. Yet, how well prepared for war were these two countries? What factors would play important roles in decisions on strategy, force structure, and locations of future battles? In preparing for these battles, what "strategic baggage" did both the British and General Washington hold in the aftermath of Bunker Hill? Could America defeat the British in war?

American Factors

Where England possessed a strong central government and an established financial system, America did not. Where Parliament could tax its subjects and bring the economy of an Empire to bear in support of the war effort, the Continental Congress could not. Where England held the prestige of being a sovereign nation and was recognized as a world power by other nations, America had yet to convince the world of its right to be called a nation. Where Great Britain boasted a professional Army and huge Navy, America's military was in its infancy. When America declared its independence and chose to defend its shores, it could claim none of the fundamental elements of national power needed to defeat the British.

America's government consisted of a confederation of 13 independent states with constitutional systems that provided strong state powers and limited executive powers based on a rational fear of a strong central government. The Continental Congress, a gathering of delegates chosen by the states, was the only central governing body. Congress had some limited powers but these did not include the right to levy taxes or the power to raise military forces directly under its auspices. The Congress could only set quotas for the states in terms of

money and troops needed to wage war based on the state's population and wealth and it was powerless to insure that the states met their quotas.[32] Thus, a centralized system for funding, raising troops, and overall control of the war did not exist. Moreover, no one in the Continental Congress possessed a marked skill in strategy making. This lack of skill would become apparent with Congress's misguided attempts at directing the initial campaigns of the war.

Much the same as Britain's division on war or peace, not all Americans favored independence and war with England. Not wanting to fight fellow subjects, loss of commerce, and fear of a destructive war were all factors that drove loyalists to stand with the King. In his book, *The War for American Independence*, Robert Coakley states, "Perhaps one-third of the politically active Americans remained loyal to the British Government."[33] The impact of the loyalist movement in America ebbed and flowed depending on the region and the successes of the British and it was a significant planning factor for the British throughout the war.[34]

Economically, America could not match the British Empire. Most Americans existed at the subsistence level and made a living off of what they grew or made. The economy, primarily agricultural in nature, was based on growing and selling raw material to England and other European nations. Two factors limited the manufacturing of finished goods in America. First, Americans viewed wealth as land owned and most worked the land rather than working in mills. Secondly, England viewed America as its main producer of raw material for **its** mills and Parliament passed several colonial policies limiting or restricting the development of industries in America.[35] Having no working, nationalized economic system greatly hindered

[32] Robert W. Coakley, *The War of the American Revolution* (Washington: U.S. Gov. Printing Office, 1975), 37.
[33] Coakley, 36.
[34] For more on the Loyalist impact during the War, see Higginbotham's *The War of American Independence*, chapter 11.
[35] For further reading on Britain's policies that restricted American industrial growth, see *The Long Fuse.*

the production of essential military supplies and thus, as Dave Palmer points out in his work, *The Way of the Fox*, "The country was patently incapable of supporting the war effort."[36]

At the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, America's military consisted of about 8,000 troops. To defend its nation, the 13 states could draw from a base of about 400,000 men, although about 20 percent were slaves and, as already noted, one-third remained loyal to the Crown.[37] In October of 1775, in order to build an army, Congress, upon the advice of Washington, created a plan to enlist an army of 26 regiments composed of 728 men each, one regiment of riflemen and another of artillery, for a total force of 20,372.[38]

However, the ineffective national military system based on state quotas and fear of standing forces greatly hindered the establishment of a large standing army and destroyed Washington's plan to create an army in the image of the British. The Continental Army would never reach the strength of 60,000 men later approved by Congress. Washington relied heavily on the state militias to round out his numbers and these inexperienced, green troops often deserted in mass. His experiences with the militia during the French and Indian War prepared Washington for the Revolutionary War, yet the same problems of lack of discipline and desertion confronted him. His frustration with the militia and desertion is evident when he wrote, "…we shall be obliged to detach one half of the army to bring back the other."[39] Overall, the American forces lacked the manpower, officers, and resources needed to fight the British.

The dismal condition of America's elements of national power did not go unnoticed by General Washington. He realized that he must consider all the strengths and weaknesses of America in his development of strategy for the war. The Colonies were weak and needed his

[36] Palmer, 31.
[37] Coakley, 36.
[38] Alpin, 48.
[39] Hughes, 279.

leadership, but the cause for American independence was strong and the British not fully committed to war.

British Factors

In London, even after realizing how tenuous their position was in America, the British government was at odds on how to resolve the crisis in the colonies. The three British officials mainly responsible for the conduct of the war: King George III, Lord North, his Prime Minister, and Lord Germain, Secretary of the State for American Department, each held strong opinions based on the use of force verses an attempt at a peaceful reconciliation. King George's attitude towards America, strongly influenced by the soldiers of the court, advocated the use of force. In a letter to Lord North, the King stated, "The New England Governments are in a state of rebellion, blows must decide whether they are to be subject to this Country or independent."[40]

The Opposition Party[41] in Parliament pushed hard for a peaceful resolution realizing that the use of force on its own would leave the Colonial government and its economic infrastructure in ruins, gaining nothing except loss of British national treasure and lives. Public opinion played a large part in British politics and sending British troops 3000 miles to fight their English brothers was not a popular idea among many in England. Many British officers resigned their positions, feeling much the same as the Earl of Effingham when he stated, "I cannot consent, without reproach of my conscience, to bear arms against my fellow subjects in America in what, to my weak discernment, is not a clear cause."[42] Opposition to the use of force would haunt the King throughout the war. Dave Palmer states, that despite the split on

[40] Higginbotham, 52.
[41] For detailed information on the Opposition Party see Piers Mackesy, *The War for America, chapter 2.*
[42] Higginbotham, 125.

how to solve the crisis, "All the English leaders agreed on the ultimate aim of the war. It was quite simple: to obtain some sort of settlement which would restore the rebellious colonies to their former status as subservient members of the British Empire."[43]

Lord North finally achieved a compromise when he won the consent of the King to send a peace commission with the expedition sailing for America for the 1776 campaign. "But if George III approved, albeit skeptically, he felt it should not interfere with military operations: negotiations were only 'to be attempted … whilst every act of vigor is unremittingly carried on.'"[44]

While the debate on how much and where to use force and to what extent peace offerings would play in the 1776 campaign continued in London, the government mobilized its elements of national power for war. But how prepared were they in 1776, to fight a war 3000 miles from England against an enemy with over 1,000 miles of coastline with innumerable bays, river-mouths, and harbors? The geographical problems would be compounded by the lack of proper roads and ports needed to sustain a large force in America.

Although, compared to America, England possessed a well-established central administration, a stable financial and economic system, and a well-organized Army and Navy, the whole establishment was ill-prepared for the struggle in America.[45] Economically, Great Britain could produce huge amounts of arms, ships, and equipment to fight the Americans but at the cost of greatly increasing their already large war debts from the Seven-Year War. Many felt the war with America was worth the debt, fearing great loss of revenue and prestige if the colonies were lost.

[43] Palmer, 38.
[44] King George quoted in Higginbotham, 148.
[45] Coakley, 41.

Diplomatically, England retained a power hold over most of Europe due to her victory in the Seven-Year War, yet both France and Spain awaited opportunities for revenge and to offer assistance to America. Rupert Hughes, author of *George Washington – The Rebel & The Patriot,* points out other problems pressuring England, "Despite their power hold, Great Britain had an Empire to run and war in India, revolts in Ireland, and actions in Africa and the West Indies added further pressure on policy makers in London."[46] America was not the only problem for Britain.

Militarily, the British possessed a professional, well-trained Army and Navy with a core of combat veterans. The forces were unmatched in abilities and the army was the superior product of intense drill and training in 18th century European warfare. However, economic cutbacks greatly reduced both forces' numbers and capabilities after the Seven-Year War with the Navy suffering the worst. On paper, the Army in late 1775, touted over 48,000 men – 39,294 infantry: 6,869 cavalry, and 2,484 artillery. The Navy cut back from 60,000 at the end of the Seven-Year War to around 18,000 in late 1775, and the 139 ship-of-the-line (above 50 guns) active at the end of the war were in a most deplorable state in 1775.[47]

Three other factors greatly influenced the British military in their bid for victory. To suppress the revolt, Britain had first to raise the necessary forces, then transport and sustain them over 3,000 miles of ocean, and finally use them effectively to regain control of a vast and sparsely populated territory. Although England greatly outnumbered America in manpower with a population that came to roughly 11 million, well above America's 3 million, the British had a very difficult time recruiting Englishmen to fight in an unpopular war. By obtaining over

[46] Rupert Hughes, *George Washington – The Rebel & The Patriot* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1927), 274.
[47] Higginbotham, 126-128.

18,000 German troops, all well trained and led, the British rounded out their numbers. Lord Germain, through force of personality, obtained over 127,000 tons of transport to support the campaign.[48] All that was left was to use the forces effectively and British officers, carrying the sword in one hand and the olive branch in the other, set off to parley for peace or meet General Washington on the battlefield.

[48] Mackesy, 61-66.

CHAPTER 3

STRATEGIES FOR WAR

Great Britain

In order to gain a clear understanding of all the factors impacting Washington's strategic decisions, one must look at his adversaries' capabilities and vulnerabilities. Washington's knowledge of Britain's military leadership, their forces, and the government that controlled them played a vital function in Washington's war plans.

While Washington was maneuvering General Howe out of Boston, Lord Germain and Parliament set about devising Britain's national strategy for America. The British could not see the colonies as a single unit, but rather as thirteen rebellious provinces to be suppressed one by one. However, how and where to strike became the question. The seat of the rebellion was in New England, yet the movement was growing in all the colonies. The loyalist strength in the South made striking there attractive, but that plan lacked decisiveness. The colonies' population, much like their Army, was spread across the entire coastline with no one single urban area holding large numbers. British planners felt attacking Washington's forces directly, a very traditional center of gravity, might lend unwanted legitimacy to Washington's generalship and cause more of the rebels to rally around him. Devising a center of gravity at the strategy level proved difficult indeed, as, "…the military and political center of America was nonexistent, or everywhere and nowhere."[49]

As early as October 1775, General Howe sent back to England the plan of taking New York and the Hudson River Valley. Howe's plans, based on his assessments of the American military and status of the rebellion, met with strong approval in London. Attacking

[49] Higginbotham, 150.

and holding New York would drive a spike between New England and the rest of the colonies, effectively isolating the seat of the rebellion. With its fine harbor and port facilities, New York would serve as a perfect foothold in America and as the port of entry for supplies and manpower from England. The Loyalist movement in New York would provide troops, intelligence, and lodging for British forces. Finally, control of New York and the Hudson River Valley would open a line of communication with British forces in Canada. Howe proposed a force of 15,000 for New York; 4000 regulars, Canadians, and Indians for an advance from Canada; and 5000 men for holding Boston, - 24,000 in all.[50]

The final plans for the Campaign of 1776 contained the majority of Howe's original plans. He would move from Halifax to New York and meet with British forces coming from the South, and his brother, Lord Admiral Howe, who was sailing from England with over 9,000 Hessian mercenaries and 13,000 sailors. General Howe would conduct an amphibious landing and either push the Americans out of New York or destroy them in a decisive battle. The sizable North American squadron, commanded by Admiral Howe, was to support land operations and conduct a naval blockade of New England ports all the way to Nova Scotia. Admiral Howe was also to, "…assault coastal towns, shelter Loyalist, dismantle American merchantmen, destroy armed vessels, impress rebel seamen, and commandeer necessary stores—in sum, carry a most vigorous war to the Americans."[51] After New York and the surrounding areas were secure, General Howe would then push up the Hudson and meet with

[50] T.S. Anderson, *The Command of the Howe Brothers During the American Revolution*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 108-119.
[51] Higginbotham, 151.

British forces moving south on the Hudson from Canada to complete the isolation of New England.

The final and most controversial aspect of the war plans involved the Howe brothers as peace commissioners for Great Britain. Lord North's desire (and many others in England) for a peaceful resolution to the crisis resulted in the Howe brothers being commissioned with the, "…power to grant pardon and to declare at peace any area where constitutional government had been restored."[52] This part of the plan was to motivate those Americans who favored peace and a return to English rule. The Howes felt that if the Americans did not accept the peace plan, a decisive battle was needed to end the resistance quickly and return things to the status quo. General Howe repeatedly informed Lord Germain that, "…only overwhelming military defeat would convince the Americans of the futility of their rebellion; nothing is more to be desired or sought for by us." However, General Howe felt the Americans, "…will not be readily brought into a situation where the king's troops can meet them upon equal terms."[53] Washington would prove him wrong and would stand to meet them on their terms in New York.

The government gave the Howes every asset possible with which to end the rebellion quickly and decisively by the end of 1776. "Lord Germain and the cabinet were bending every muscle to crush the revolt in a single campaign."[54] However, with the arrival of his brother in New York, General Howe's attitude towards decisive battle changed drastically and their duties as peace commissioners greatly affected their military performance.

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[52] Ira D. Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution*, (Williamsburg, VA: Univ. of N. Carolina Press, 1972), 77.
[53] General Howe quoted in Higginbotham, 151.
[54] Higgenbotham, 152.

America

When a nation must fight a foe that has almost every advantage it is very difficult to determine the foe's center of gravity. American planners initially could only react to Britain's moves and act defensively. They knew that the Opposition Party wanted a peaceful resolution to the crisis and would pressure the King to end hostilities as soon as possible. They knew that time was on their side if they could keep the revolution alive and could draw a waiting France into the conflict. Thus, the British strategic center of gravity was the will of its people and Washington must have known that he must defend the nation to buy time for the revolution.

To defend their new independence, America would have to fight the British. The question remained where and when to fight. The British Fleet could land thousands of troops anywhere along the coastline and maneuver at will along rivers and bays. The battle must be planned to give the Americans every advantage against the seasoned British forces. A decisive loss at this stage in the revolution would most certainly be fatal, yet General Washington and Congress knew they would have to stand and fight. Palmer points out the General's desperate situation, "Washington quickly grasped the dilemma inherent in the new rules: if he fought, he could lose it all, yet if he refused to fight, he could lose it all."[55]

At the beginning of the war, the Congress retained responsibility for American strategic decisions and they, like many others, totally misread the results of tactical actions on Bunker Hill. Their analysis had three fundamentally wrong assumptions: first, the idea that the British would repeat the mistake of frontally attacking dug in troops on the high ground; second, the idea that the militia would rise to the occasion and that they could, "…route the British regulars

[55] Palmer, 116.

on a day's notice;"[56] and third, the impact of 18th century warfare thinking that wars were decided in one large battle or "general action" led to Congress thinking no enlistment needed to be longer that one year and that a costly large standing army was not needed.

Initially, these wrong assumptions presented Washington with a multitude of problems. Based on these assumptions, plans devised by Congress before Washington became the Commander-in-Chief again came to the forefront for consideration. Defending New York, closing the Hudson, and invading Canada sparked great interest in Congress. Washington, being proactive and anticipating Howe's next move, sent troops to begin the fortification of New York. It was at this time that Congress realized that one man alone should be making military decisions. In his work on General Washington's war strategies, *The Way of the Fox*, Dave Palmer states, "…the assembly resolved that General Washington be informed that Congress have such an entire confidence in his judgment, that they will give him no particular directions about the disposition of his troops, but desire that he will dispose [them] as to him shall seem most conducive to the public good."[57] General Washington became America's top strategist yet the assumptions from Bunker Hill still clouded his and his generals' vision.

The defense of New York became America's number one strategic option for many of the same reasons that the British wanted to occupy it. However, Washington realized that the British, with their superior naval mobility, could trap him and his army at will if they landed up river from New York. Congress felt that to give it up without a fight would deal a harmful blow to the revolution, give England decisive control of the Hudson waterway to Canada and greatly stretch Washington's lines of communication with New England.

[56] Thomas Fleming, George Washington, General, *The Quarterly Journal of Military History*, Winter, 1990, 39.
[57] Palmer, 61

Reluctantly General Washington, "…agreed with Congress that in the current political situation, when public opinion had not yet coalesced in opposition to Great Britain, the effect on moral of abandoning…a major city would be disastrous."[58] He knew New York could not be lost.

General Washington became the central figure in the formulation of American strategy the day the Continental Congress placed their confidence in him. He was now in a position to assess the impact of England's ability, willingness, and strategies for making war with America, as each of these would have an impact on his initial strategy. He knew he was outgunned at almost every level, yet he realized from lessons learned at Bunker Hill that the British could not accept many casualties in battle. He would also learn of England's desire for peace from General Howe before the Battle of Long Island and that certainly played a part in his strategy formulation, as he knew not everyone in England wished for war. He knew all too well the capabilities of his own forces, but also felt they would fight if given a wall to fire behind and leadership to keep them in the fight. He knew that the Continental Congress would be of little help and that he must carry the weight of the war on his shoulders. With visions of a repeat of the Battle of Bunker Hill engrained in his head, Washington set about to defend New York the best way he knew how, to fortify the high ground.

[58] Flexner, 77.

CHAPTER 4

PLANS FOR NEW YORK

Washington Defends "Bunker Hill" Style

Washington, constrained by Congress to defend New York, understood the city's political importance yet welcomed word from Congress assuring him, "…that he need not feel obligated to hold New York City a moment longer that he shall think it proper."[59] Though New York held strategic importance to the cause, defending it created great tactical problems for Washington. The British already showed that they could move up the Hudson at will when, on 12 July 1776, two British warships sailed past Patriot batteries and all the obstacles intended to stop them, all the way to Tappan Bay and back. Both Washington and the Howes knew the British could land troops on the northern end of Manhattan anytime they chose.[60]

To oppose the expected British invasion of New York, Washington commanded approximately 10,000 regulars. With these, plus 13,000 militia, he planned to defend a city surrounded by rivers that permitted the enemy to land where and when they chose. Most of this army had been together only weeks. The majority of them had little or no training and had not fired a shot in anger. Morale was high due to victory in Boston, but Washington realized that with this army, he could not compete with the British in European style warfare, and he set about to even the odds. His generals convinced him that the militia could operate as well as regulars from behind Bunker Hill-like barricades. As Israel Putnam, the commander at Bunker Hill, summed it up, "Cover Americans to their chins and they will fight until doomsday."[61]

[59] Palmer, 125.
[60] James W. Flanagan, "Decisive Victory Let Go," *Military History*, February, 1991, 34.
[61] Fleming, 39.

Washington based his operational plan for the defense of New York on the assumption that the British would need to secure the high grounds around New York for their artillery. He also thought they would conduct frontal attacks on American strong holds defending that ground as they did at Bunker Hill. Thus, "…on Brooklyn Heights and at various points around Manhattan, his men expended immense amounts of energy building forts on which the British were expected to impale themselves."[62] He also had both Fort Washington and Fort Lee (see #2 on map, page vi) built to guard the Hudson and employed shore batteries along the river to offset his lack of naval assets. However, Washington lacked engineers as well as troops, and the fortifications suffered in both quality and number.

Washington felt compelled to split his force to be able to confront as many of the British options as he could. (see #1 on map, page vi) In the face of overwhelming enemy numbers, Washington's decision to split his force and leave them to be destroyed piecemeal was a huge gamble. Tactically, he was still learning the finer points of combat and General Howe would soon take him to task for this on Long Island. However, Washington felt that if he held the high ground surrounding New York, he could force General Howe to attack his strong points at great cost.

To hold the commanding ground on Brooklyn Heights, Washington picked his best general, General Nathaniel Greene. With about 4,000 militia, General Greene set up earthworks that ran from Gowanus Bay to Wallabout Bay and completely enclosed Brooklyn Heights. He had only 35 guns and would require more time to make his position defensible. However, before the British landed, Greene fell ill and was eventually replaced by General Putnam.

General Putnam had very little time to familiarize himself with the ground he commanded before the British attacked. Washington reinforced him on the 25th of August,

[62] Fleming, 39.

bringing Putnam's total strength on Long Island to around 10,000. (see #3 on map, page vi) On that same day British intentions became clear to General Heath from his vantage point in New York City, as he recalls in his memoirs, "… a number of the enemy's ships fell down towards the Narrows: it was supposed with intent to land more troops on Long Island."[63] Washington's letter to Congress on 26 August revealed his understanding of the British plan as he writes, "…almost the whole of the enemy's Fleet have fallen down to the Narrows and we are led to think, they mean to land the Main body of their Army on Long Island, and to make their grand push there."[64] Washington remained on Manhattan Island with approximately 12,000 troops. While the Americans desperately shored up their earthworks and awaited the massive British attack, the Howe brothers looked for another chance at reconciliation.

British Stage for Action

There can be little doubt that the British were serious when they sailed into New York Harbor:

> General Howe had collected more that 32,000 well-drilled, well-supplied professional soldiers. Among them were some of the best units in the British Army, together with 27 regiments of line infantry… all supported by artillery and some light dragoon cavalry. In addition to these Irish, Scot, Welsh, and English troops, Howe could field some 8,000 German mercenaries under the command of a war-scarred veteran, Philip von Heister. Howe's power continued in the person of his brother, the admiral, with 13,000 seamen… 427 transports, 73 warships, mounting 1200 guns, available to pound the rebels[65]

The government worked desperately to ensure the Howes had the needed forces for a decisive campaign in 1776. They retained almost every advantage over Washington's overextended, vulnerable forces. The British anxiously awaited an opportunity to face the upstart Americans

[63] William Heath, Major General, *Memoirs of the American War*, (New York: A. Wessel Co., 1904), 65.
[64] Fitzpatrick, online, L.O.C., *vol. 6.*
[65] Flanagan, 32.

and their morale matched the high level of professionalism of each soldier. However, "…they could not easily forget that they were fighting against men of their own race. Here pity interposes," wrote General Phillips, "and we cannot forget that when we strike we wound a brother."[66]

Along with the superb forces Howe had at his disposal, he also retained some very strong general officers with which to prosecute his objectives. General Clinton, having just returned from South Carolina, would play a vital role in the British rout of Brooklyn Heights. Generals Cornwallis, Grant, Percy, and Von Heister rounded out Howe's generals and solidified the British chain of command.

General Howe's operational plan called for a combination of decisive maneuvers to avoid Bunker Hill-type assaults and peace negotiations. Realizing that Brooklyn Heights flanked the city of New York on its east, Howe planned to flank Manhattan Island and Brooklyn Heights by attacking east to west. After he massed all of his forces, the General would conduct an amphibious landing on Staten Island to gain a bridge-head for the follow up movement to Long Island. Admiral Howe would simultaneously move some of his battle ships towards the town of New York to act as a diversion. Once massed on Long Island, General Howe would take Brooklyn Heights, thus controlling the decisive point over New York.[67]

The second part of the Howe brothers' plan centered on their duty and desire to obtain a peaceful resolution to the crisis. Both of the Howes seemed unquestionably devoted to the task of ending the war without imbruing their hands in American blood. With promises of pardons from the King, General Howe sent his adjutant, "Colonel Patterson, on the 20th of July

[66] General Phillips quoted in Mackesy, 33.
[67] Anderson, 131.

to meet with Washington if possible, to bring about an accommodation."[68] Washington answered, "…[t]hose who have committed no fault, need no pardon."[69] The Howes wanted peace but the revolution had too come to far. The Americans would require a good drubbing to bring them to their senses. Yet, General Howe's memories of defeat at Bunker Hill and his brother's desire for peace would drive decisions during the campaign. Neither of the officers seemed to be giving all of their attention to fighting the Americans and their lack of aggressiveness would allow Washington, time and time again, to slip away. Washington would learn quickly from the Howes' mistakes and his eye for the battlefield began to piece together a plan for defeating the British.

[68] Heath, 59.
[69] Hughes, 424.

CHAPTER 5

1776 CAMPAIGN

The Battle of Long Island

Throughout July and into early August of 1776, the British massed their forces on Staten Island, bringing their total numbers to over 32,000. Yet, British lack of aggressiveness began to show itself as the troops sat on Staten Island for seven weeks. On the 22nd of August, General Howe set the campaign in motion with a meticulously planned amphibious landing starting with his advanced guard of over 4,000 troops at the unopposed Denyses Ferry. (see #4 on map, page vi) General Heath witnessed the movement and stated that Howe, "…put ashore about fifteen thousand men, a regiment of cavalry and forty guns."[70] By the 25th, Howe would have over 20,000 troops staged on Long Island and he then spent the next three days reconnoitering the land. The Americans occupied Brooklyn Heights in force behind strong earthworks and extended their lines well beyond the Heights. Four passes penetrated the Heights; unfortunately, the Americans left Jamaica Pass, the northernmost one, almost unguarded. The terrain study paid off as Clinton discovered the Pass and Howe devised a plan to flank the Americans.[71]

Howe would send Generals Grant and Von Heister (see #'s 5&6 on map, page vi) against the American lines in a demonstration supported by Lord Howe's naval diversion on the Hudson. This would pin down Washington, who feared the Long Island attack was a diversion for an attack on Manhattan, and would also keep the Americans on the Heights of Guam engaged. He then would march 10,000 of his troops around the Heights and attack along Jamaica Pass.

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[70] General Heath quoted in Hughes, 437
[71] T.J. Stiles, *In Their Own Words – Founding Fathers*, (New York: Perigee, 1999), 132

On the night of the 26th, Howe set all players in motion and General Clinton led the flanking force (see # 8 on map, page vi) into their jump-off position undetected by the Americans. At daybreak Grant and Von Heister pounded the American lines on the Heights followed by strong demonstrations to the Americans' front. Then, just as planned, General Cornwallis hit the American left flank and looped around its rear.

The battle plan worked superbly and, despite heroic efforts by some patriots, the American line collapsed under the weight of the three-pronged attack. They fell back to the fortifications on Brooklyn Heights in a state of panic as Washington rushed across the East River with reinforcements. Washington, watching General Stirling's gallant charges stated, "…good God, what brave men I must lose this day!"[72] As the last of the tattered American survivors made for the American lines, the British prepared for the final assault on the Heights. Up to that point in the battle the Americans lost over 200 killed and over 1,000 captured, to include Generals Sullivan and Alexander. The British only lost 400 casualties. "Behind the ramparts, Washington and some 9,000 badly shaken Americans awaited the inevitable assault. But… orders came from the British rear to cease and desist."[73] General Howe, following the 18th century mode for making war, opted to conduct a siege versus a frontal assault on Brooklyn Heights, and his men began digging trenches and building gun positions for artillery. This action constitutes the second time the British displayed a certain amount of caution and lack of aggressiveness in the face of Washington's forces. Another piece of the strategic puzzle was becoming clearer to General Washington.

[72] Washington quoted in Dupuy, 42.
[73] Thomas J. Fleming, "The Enigma of General Howe," *American Heritage*, Volume XV, no.2, (February 1964), 9. Hereafter cited as, Fleming, "The Enigma."

Despite criticism by many, Washington's decision to reinforce Long Island remains a standing tribute to his genius and his understanding of General Howe. If Washington failed to reinforce during the battle, the British may have taken the entire army on Brooklyn Heights and with it Washington's artillery. Washington may have made an error in dividing his forces but he saved the day by presenting fortifications that appeared too well manned for General Howe's cautious plans.

Moreover, Washington still controlled the Heights. He protected his line of retreat by staging the boats to move his forces to Manhattan. He wanted to, "…make his foe 'wade through much blood and slaughter' on the slopes leading up to the American positions."[74] This was the Bunker Hill repeat that Washington hoped for, yet it appeared that Howe would not make the same mistake twice. After two days of stand off, and not wanting to submit his already demoralized men to a siege, Washington submitted to a council of war that advised a withdrawal. On the night of 29 August, Washington conducted a superb tactical withdrawal to Manhattan of over 10,000 men and their equipment. Howe's men awoke to find the Americans gone and Long Island theirs. The Continental Army survived their first encounter with the British because of General Howe's caution and General Washington's courage to make the right decisions.

General Washington's lack of tactical skills and the pressure from Congress put his army into a very difficult situation. He had every reason to believe at the time that the British would attack his dug-in forces frontally and he was simply out-maneuvered on Long Island. However, Washington was a very quick study of the British and he knew that he could not survive siege warfare against a professional army. His correct decision to withdraw from

[74] Washington quoted in Palmer, 122

Brooklyn Heights and the manner in which he conducted the withdrawal again brings to mind Clausewitz and his definition of military genius. The plan to evacuate his exposed army plan was a masterpiece of tactical surprise, skill and courage. The execution was pure military genius. Washington would learn a great deal from the ordeal and his use of the night, surprise, and maneuver would become the basis of the strategy he sought to defeat the British.

The Battle of Manhattan (Kips Bay)

British forces now controlled Long Island, Staten Island and all the waters around Manhattan. Washington's lack of naval assets again opened great opportunities to the Howes as, with one blow, they could cut off Washington's retreat at Kingsbridge. However, instead of further military action, the Howes made another bid for peace by sending the captured General Sullivan to Philadelphia with offers to end the crisis. Led by Benjamin Franklin, a Congressional committee met with Admiral Howe on Staten Island but, "…as one British official remarked: 'They met, they talked, they parted. And now nothing remains but to fight it out.'"[75] Two weeks would pass before the next British action. This lull reinforced Washington's feeling that the British were not fully behind the war effort. For the second time in as many months, the British waited for Washington to strengthen his position on the high ground before attacking. General Washington was beginning to understand the British fear of casualties and now wondered if he correctly assessed his enemies' willingness to attacked entrenched troops. His view on how the British would fight began to change and this became yet another piece of his strategy. But he would have several more lessons to learn before completing the strategy. His first concern was keeping his army together.

[75] Gruber, 119.

The morale of Washington's forces hit an all time low after the retreat from Long Island. Entire regiments of militia deserted leaving those that stayed behind even less confident. Washington set his army to work building fortifications with the threat of the British landing at will causing the defenders to spread themselves too thinly. He placed General Putnam in the town of New York with some 5000 men and defenders on both sides of the island facing the Hudson and East Rivers.

Several of his officers advised Washington to give up Manhattan, burn New York, and move onto the mainland. General Greene's letter of 5 September to Washington states:

> The City and Island of New York are no objects for us… Part of the army has already met with defeat; the country is struck with panic; any capital loss at this time may ruin the cause. Tis our business to study to avoid any considerable misfortune, and to take post where the enemy will be obliged to fight us, and not us him.[76]

General Greene's advice to avoid battle unless it was on Colonial terms added another element to the new strategy for fighting the British forming in Washington's mind. Washington learned a valuable lesson on Long Island, as stated in his letter to Congress after the battle. "We should on all occasions avoid a general action, or put anything to the risk, unless compelled by a necessity into which we ought never to be drawn. ...wisdom of cooler moments and experienced men have decided that we should protract the war if possible."[77] The new strategy continued to develop, however crucial elements still remained unclear to Washington. Fight on the right terms, protract the war, and avoid costly defeats. All these became elements of America's future strategy. However, the strategy lacked conviction, as Washington and his

[76] General Greene quoted in Palmer, 124.
[77] Washington quoted in Freeman, vol. 4, 217.

generals were themselves still infected with the Bunker Hill virus, which they now called "a war of post."[78]

Despite the great danger of the Howes sailing up the Hudson and completely entrapping Washington's army in Manhattan, Washington remained in New York. He correctly assessed the demoralized state of his troops after Long Island and knew that another retreat might break them. Bruce Bliven, the noted expert on the Battle of Harlem Heights, points out that General Washington, "…instead, chose to fight General Howe realizing that by a successful battle, however small, [he] could prove to the satisfaction of his soldiers that the British were something less than invincible."[79] In short, Washington could rebuild his army. Though the desired battle to raise the spirits of a demoralized army would eventually come, they would first have to withstand another British onslaught.

Convinced by his officers that the army could no longer hold the city, Washington gave orders on the 15th of September to abandon New York and consolidate all forces on Harlem Heights. However, the Howes interrupted this consolidation and landed 4,000 troops supported by five warships with over 70 guns, at Kips Bay. (see #9 on map, page vi) Ambrose Serle, who was on board H.M.S. Eagle, recorded the event in his Journal. He wrote, "So terrible and so incessant a Roar of Guns few even in the Army & Navy had ever heard before. The Rebel were apparently frightened away by the horrid Din, and deserted the Town and all their Works in the utmost Precipitation."[80] Washington could only watch in dismay as the militia at the Bay broke and ran in such a fashion that Washington, "…[a]t last drew up, threw his hat on

[78] Fleming, 39.
[79] Bruce Bliven, Jr., *Battle for Manhattan*, (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1955), 17.
[80] Willian J. Morgan, ed., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution, Volume 6*, (Washington D.C.: Naval History Division, 1972), 843.

the ground, and exclaimed, 'Are these the men with which I am to defend America?'"[81] The landing caught General Putnam and his 5000 troops in the city and would have cut them off completely if Howe moved directly across the island instead of waiting for his next wave of 4000 troops. Putnam was able to escape the trap but left behind 67 guns and more than 13,000 rounds of artillery ammunition in the city.[82] By evening on the 15th, Washington stood with his entire army on Harlem Heights and General Howe owned all of New York City.

Battle of Harlem Heights and the American Evacuation of Manhattan

General Howe's landing at Kips Bay was an amphibious masterpiece. His forces conducted a well-coordinated, combined arms attack to seize the Bay with very few casualties. Twice he forced Washington to retreat through maneuver, avoiding costly frontal assaults to end up in control of both Long Island and New York. He now faced the problem of yet another battle against Washington's entrenched force on Harlem Heights. He quickly discovered that the Americans, though badly shaken, still wanted to fight when his Hessian and British Light Infantry engaged American forces on the morning of the 16th. In a sharp, four-hour battle, the Americans outmaneuvered and outfought Howe's men, forcing the first British retreat.

The American triumph was just the small victory that Washington knew his men needed. The sight of the British running from the field proved that the British could be beaten. American morale soared as Bliven points out, "…their spirits were so much higher than they had been only twenty-four hours before that the camp was hardly recognizable."[83] Washington praised his army in his General Orders of 17 September 1776, with the following

[81] Washington quoted in Richard Wheeler, *Voices of 1776*, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1972), 138.
[82] Bliven, 53.
[83] Bliven, 102.

words, "The Behavior of Yesterday was such a Contrast, to that of some of Troops the day before, as must shew [sic] what may be done, where Officers and Soldiers will exert themselves."[84] The small victory further developed the new strategy for fighting the British growing in Washington's mind. By winning the small battle, he and his men now knew that the British could be beaten in limited engagements. He also knew that every casualty suffered by the British greatly diminished their ability for sustained operations in America. Yet, he still clung to the hopes that Howe would attack him frontally on Harlem Heights. It was not until the Howes conducted a series of amphibious landings at Throg's Neck and Pell's Point that Washington gave up his fortifications at Harlem Heights and retreated off the Island. Howe would subsequently outmaneuver Washington again at White Plains and drive Washington out of New York State.

Although the British repeatedly bested General Washington on the battlefield, his own military character and style became apparent. He was a man willing to gamble when the stakes were very high, as he displayed when he reinforced Brooklyn Heights in the face of certain defeat. He displayed great courage and calmness under pressure when he conducted a perfect night withdrawal under pressure. Washington displayed a noteworthy understanding of his own forces and an excellent sense of battlefield timing when he stood toe-to-toe with the British on Harlem Heights in a limited engagement for which he set the conditions. Each of these experiences added to the strategic concept forming in Washington's mind. He saw the advantage of maneuver, the value of delaying to save time, and the need to attrite the British as key elements to his strategy. However, he would require one last costly tactical lesson before the "war of post" virus could be cured.

[84] Washington quoted in Fitzpatrick, online L.O.C., vol. 6.

CHAPTER 6

THE TURNING POINT

Washington's army was in a most deplorable state. Desertion, enlistments expiring, and lack of supplies drove to state, "…such is my situation that if I were to wish the bitterest curse to an enemy on this side of the grave, I should put him in my stead with my feelings."[85] To make matters worse, Fort Washington fell to the British on 16 November 1776, at considerable cost to the Colonial cause. General Washington wanted to evacuate the fort before the British could take it but General Greene convinced him that the fort could withstand any British attacks. Washington watched from Fort Lee, directly across the Hudson River, in utter dismay as British units stormed Fort Washington, forcing its surrender. The fall of Fort Washington would have a significant impact on General Washington and acted as a catalyst for the final element of his new strategy.

Washington's past bad experiences during the French and Indian War with recruitment and militia now paled in comparison to his current dilemmas. He wrote to Congress pleading for relief from short enlistments, bad militia, and lack of pay. He wrote, "To place any dependance [sic] upon the Militia, is, assuredly, resting upon a broken staff."[86] Another crucial element of Washington's new strategy now formed, as he informed Congress that it was, "…imperative to recruit regulars committed to serve for the duration, and end their dependence on militia."[87] The series of defeats for Washington also quickly dampened patriotic spirit throughout the Colonies. Recruitment, during these desperate times, of men willing to give their lives for a now questionable cause plagued Washington's officers. The

[85] Washington quoted in Padover, 147.
[86] Edmund S. Morgan, *The Genius of Washington*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), 47.
[87] Fleming, 39.

relief so badly need by Washington was actually in his hands and he knew he must give America a significant victory or the cause was lost. Would the opportunity present itself?

Only Fort Lee remained guarding the Hudson. When Washington learned that the Fort was going to be attacked by the British, he rode in person to give the order to retreat. The loss of Fort Washington, and the badly needed troops and supplies finally cleared the last of the misleading Bunker Hill assumptions from Washington's mind. The final crucial element for his new strategy came at the cost of Fort Washington and Washington now understood that he must adopt a much-maligned strategy in 18th century warfare—**Retreat until the enemy showed a weakness!** "That was the day Washington began fighting a new kind of war in America."[88] Words written by Washington in August of 1775, must have flown to the forefront of his mind,

> Enterprises which appear Chimeral [he said] often prove successful from that very Circumstance, Common Sense & Prudence will Suggest Vigilance and care, when the Danger is plain and obvious, but when little Danger is apprehended, the more the enemy is unprepared and consequently there is the fain'd Prospect of Success.[89]

He would no longer tie himself to a piece of terrain or put himself in a vulnerable position for the sake of holding anything. Forts and cities could be rebuilt; Washington's army could not! With this final element of his strategy now in place, Washington placed America on the same playing field as the once superior British forces. With caution as his watchword and the mission to save the revolution his to achieve or fail, Washington was about to shock the British and the world.

[88] Fleming, 40.
[89] Washington quoted in Fitzpatrich, online, L.O.C., vol. 3.

A New War and A Revived Cause

On the 25th of December 1776, Washington took into his hands the fate of the entire War for Independence and every American who believed in the cause, to give the Colonies the victory they desperately needed to continue the war. In a daring raid, Washington surprised, killed or captured 1,500 Hessian troops at Trenton, New Jersey. A mere week later, he used the same deception plan he used at Brooklyn Heights to hold the British in place, then wheeled his army around the British left flank. He destroyed three regiments at Princeton, slipping away before the British could react. He then returned to his winter quarters and passed the word that those who had changed sides to the British could now return to the American cause. Recruitment soared, loyalist activity dwindled, and the British now cringed awaiting Washington's next move. Captain Johann Ewald, of the Hessian Field Jager Corps, described the drastic turn of events in his diary,

> Thus had the times changed! The Americans had constantly run before us. Four weeks ago we expected to end the war with the capture of Philadelphia, and now we had to render Washington the honor of thinking about our defense. Due to this affair at Trenton, such a fright came over the army that if Washington had used this opportunity we would have flown to our ships and let him have all of America. [90]

Washington pulled off one of the greatest comebacks in military history through sheer determination, leadership and military genius. The effect of his victories at Trenton and Princeton reenergized the Colonial war effort and revitalized Washington's army. This dramatic shift of momentum for America came at a most critical time and put the British on the unfamiliar ground of defeat.

[90] Johann Ewald, Capt, Field Jager Corps, *Diary of the American War,* (London: Yale University Press, 1979), 44.

The selection of General Howe and his brother to carry the campaign against Washington ended up being a blessing in disguise for General Washington. Having almost every advantage, they blundered perfect opportunities at both Long Island and Manhattan to destroy Washington's Army in decisive battle. Instead they avoided direct confrontation and chose to maneuver Washington out of New York, leaving Washington to rally at Trenton, a loss of strategic proportion to the British. General Howe's decision to avoid a general engagement seemed to be clouded by his and his brother's desire for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Each time, after handing Washington a serious defeat, General Howe parlayed for peace instead of crushing the Continental Army as his government instructed. Also, fear of Bunker-Hill type losses and the difficulty of replacing his troops drove Howe to adopt a very conservative strategy throughout the campaign.

General Washington used the Howes' lack of aggressiveness and timidity to his advantage to buy time and experience. He did not want the peace offered by General Howe, he wanted independence. He needed time, and the uncommitted Howe brothers gave it to him. The great Swiss military writer Jomini sums up the Howes' situation as a violation of the art of war. "To commit the execution of a purpose to one who disapproves of the plan of it, is to employ but one third of the man; his heart and his head are against you; you have command of only his hands."[91] For England, appointment of the Howes to lead the campaign meant victory let go. For America, it meant victory was possible.

[91] Fleming, "The Enigma," 103.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

There can be little doubt that George Washington's military experiences during the French and Indian War greatly assisted him during the Revolutionary War. His early frontier work instilled the toughness and backwoods savvy he would need to physically handle the stresses of wartime. His work with the British army provided a basis of military knowledge and strategy that would become the foundation of his martial arts. He never forgot his passion for offensive action and his dislike for the defense. His experiences with the Indians and militia from numerous colonies taught him the fine art of coalition warfare and bringing different peoples together for one cause. His continuous requests for more and better supplies and men would give him insight into the huge burden faced by the Congress during the Revolutionary War. Finally, his cool-headed leadership under fire provided the framework on which an entire nation and its sole army would rest. All of his experiences throughout this period helped form the framework of his strategy for the War of Independence.

General Washington became the Commander-in-Chief of the Colonial Army at the same time the British began planning the Campaign of 1776. Washington could not have possibly fathomed the immensity of the task that lay before him. From his knowledge of the British, he understood that England would hold almost every advantage in resources, manpower, and equipment over the newly formed Colonial Army. He knew that the British Army and Navy came from the world's strongest empire and would present an adversary seemingly impossible to beat. He knew that he would have little help from his government in everything except strong words of encouragement. He knew this war was his to win or his to lose.

Initially, General Washington did not have a firm plan for fighting the British. He was influenced greatly by events and by Congress in his first assessment of the British warfighting intentions. As the war geared up for its first all out campaign, Washington fell victim to the same misleading assumptions from Bunker Hill as Congress and the rest of his generals. It took many painful lessons at the hands of the British generals to shed the erroneous lessons from Bunker Hill on which the Americans' based their initial strategy for fighting the British.

Washington's belief that entrenched American militia on short enlistments could defeat British regulars in a "war of post" almost cost him and America its independence. Only after several near fatal escapes and the very costly surrender of Fort Washington did Washington finally conceptualize the strategy that would rescue the revolution, save his army, and eventually, win the war for America. Yet, the true genius of Washington is that he, "…conceived this winning strategy while most of the others around him were losing their heads."[92] Thomas Fleming ties together Washington's new strategy in his article, "George Washington, General." He states Washington four-part strategy came together, "…in the previous chaotic months of defeat and disillusion." It consisted of, "…recruiting a regular army for the duration, protracting the war, never risking a general action, and retreating until the enemy exposed a part of their army to insult or destruction."[93] Sun Tzu's words on strategy are worth repeating here as they truly fit Washington's strategy for the War of Independence. "The good fighters of old first put themselves beyond the possibility of defeat, and then waited for an opportunity of defeating the enemy."[94]

[92] Fleming, 42.
[93] Fleming, 42.
[94] Sun Tzu, 19.

The dramatic change in strategy by Washington resulting in the victories at Trenton and Princeton changed everyone's view of the war. He combined the exploitation of England's critical vulnerabilities of wanting peace and not wanting to lose British lives in America with the Colonial's only possible strategy for winning, and in doing so, demonstrated to the world that the American cause was real. SunTzu would have given the highest praise to Washington for his abilities to adapt his strategy in the face of the enemy. As he states in *The Art of War,* "He who can modify his tactics in relation to his opponent, and thereby succeed in winning, may be called a heaven-born captain."[95] Against all the odds and perhaps with a little help from Providence, this heaven-borne general named George Washington defended his newly formed country at the time it was most vulnerable. His leadership and military genius combined brilliantly to produce the men, the strategy, and the indomitable human spirit needed to give birth to a nation.

[95] Sun Tzu, 29.

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